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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a pilot project, conducted within the American English Institute at the University of Oregon, on the use of a published business-oriented management simulation in English language training for university-bound international students. The management game simulated competition among a group of manufacturing companies to acquire raw materials, manufacture finished goods, and sell the goods on the open market. The theoretical framework under which this pilot project was conducted is the communicative approach to second language teaching and testing. The simulation was conducted over 2 days for a total of 12 hours; eight staff members coordinated the event and 20 students participated, receiving compensation for their involvement. Three kinds of language activity occurred during the simulation game: natural discourse stimulated by the game, language pre- and post-tests, and additional written discourse exercises based on a memorandum and a business letter. Results indicated significant improvement in language skills among participants. Findings also showed that the participants performing best in the simulation also showed the greatest improvement on a final business concepts test. Game-players also participated actively in discourse and responded enthusiastically to the simulation. Guidelines and methodological suggestions for choosing, preparing for, and conducting a simulation are provided. (MSE)

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BUSINESS SIMULATIONS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION

The essential premise of communicative language teaching is that successful second language acquisition is best facilitated through the learner solving real and interesting problems in the second language (Widdowson 1978, inter alia). Within the general communicative approach, it is often difficult to select or design appropriately challenging and interesting problems for students to tackle. Good simulations of academic or professional activities can be used to provide such problems for second language students. Such simulations appear useful for language training for a number of reasons: (1) they are interesting and challenging to students, (2) the critical academic substance is provided by the simulation designers, who are experts in the particular discipline, (3) the simulation format presents natural opportunities for inserting additional language learning activities.

This paper describes a pilot project, conducted within the American English Institute at the University of Oregon, on the use of a published business-oriented management simulation in English language training for university-bound international students. The paper considers the rationale for the pilot project, the details of organizing language teaching around a particular business simulation, the results of our pilot effort, and recommendations on how to implement similar language teaching efforts.

Problems and issues in intensive ELT programs

There are a number of specific problems in developing the language teaching curriculum in an intensive program such as that at the American English Institute. Unlike many traditional foreign language courses in the university setting, even those called 'intensive', the Institute sees its students an average of 26 hours per week. Students enroll in the Institute for as many as four academic quarters before gaining admission to either graduate and undergraduate programs at the University of Oregon or a similar institution. The student population is heterogeneous, embracing a wide variety of academic specialties and linguistic backgrounds. These circumstances generate several problems which the pilot simulation was designed to address.

The first issue is an affective one. Maintaining motivation and interest can become difficult for students, for language training may seem both routine and divorced from primary goals. Language learning is often seen as a secondary activity, a hurdle to be overcome before beginning 'real' work. Even where traditional language training is done well and creatively, it can become frustrating and dull for some students in the intensive institute setting.

The second issue is the feasibility of providing a wide range of specific purpose courses given the Institute's heterogeneous student population. This population represents more than 30 different nations, virtually all major academic and professional disciplines, and graduate as well as undergraduate study. Given student diversity and the costs of staffing numerous small classes, it is simply not feasible to offer a wide variety special purpose language courses, yet students still desire more specific purpose training.

The third issue is the level of active student involvement in typical oral skills classes. It is generally accepted that learning is enhanced for students who actively engage in communicative activity. Engagement in communicative activity, in turn, is a function of the type of communicative demand placed upon the student by the task. Tasks <u>require</u> engagement if the student is placed, in effect, on-stage during linguistic performance (as is commonly seen in oral skills classes). On the other hand, tasks <u>invite</u> engagement if the student is individually motivated to respond during the communicative activity.

Oral communication classes are most successful when they have a high density of individually motivated student response. Effective teaching methods achieve high levels of student engagement not by <u>requiring</u> it but by so strongly <u>inviting</u> it that the student has no 'choice' but to be actively engaged in oral communication.

Simulations are one way of addressing these issues. Simulations strive to represent some portion of the 'real world' in a specific content area; thus they can do much to reduce the level of student frustration and make the language learning situation appear more viable. This type of specific purpose training can be provided to students in a wide variety of disciplines at minimal cost to the institute, in constrast to more expensive full-term ESP courses. Finally, simulations <u>invite</u> a high level of individually motivated student response since interaction revolves around solving a 'real' problem of genuine interest to the students. Students find themselves in what in many respects is an ideal learning situation: a high level of enthusiasm and student engagement in communicative activity with a minimum of overt teacher interference.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework under which this pilot project was conducted is the communicative approach to second language learning and teaching. This approach argues in general that language learning is best facilitated when students are engaged in solving genuine problems using the target language. The focus in both learning and teaching is removed from the language itself (usage) and placed upon its instrumental role in human communication (use). The best representative work in the communicative approach is that of Henry Widdowson (1978, inter alia). Widdowson and others have created an extensive body of research describing how to make language teaching more communicative, research which is grounded in considerable practical success in teaching second languages (primarily English).

Among the particular recommendations made for communicative language teaching are the following:

(1) Focus the learner on language use rather than on language usage. That is, involve the learner in using the new language to solve non-language problems that are meaningful to him.

(2) Engage the learner in meaningful discourse. All natural language use involves communication in specific discourse contexts; one does not ordinarily communicate in a series of unrelated or artificially connected sentences. The language learning setting therefore should present the learner with meaningful discourse contexts in which to work.

(3) Keep language skills integrated in language training. In natural discourse, especially during oral communication, language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are not ordinarily separated from one another. Similarly, in language training, one should seek to integrate language skills in communicative activities.

Within the general theoretical and methodological framework of the communicative approach, there are several specific studies that have influenced this pilot project. First, Skeldon and Swales (1983) describe the organization of special, short-term language training seminars for students of engineering at the University of Aston in Birmingham. Motivated primarily by time pressures within the regular curriculum, the seminar described consisted of several teams of engineering students competing to design a novel musical instrument, or `music machine'. Information necessary for effective design was provided through videotapes and readings, and students were forced to engage in both oral and written discourse in order to compete successfully. Skeldon and Swales report the seminar to have been successful, both affectively and linguistically.

Second, Edge and Samuda (1980) have argued convincingly for what they call language teaching `methodials'. They point out that traditional language teaching methodology, even in more discourse oriented approaches like notional-functional teaching, is organized through a strategy of `Presentation, Practice, and Perfection'. The teacher initially presents a model of the relevant language form or function; the student then practices production of similar language material, polishing and perfecting performance over time. Methodials, consistent with the premises of the communicative approach, are organized through a different strategy, one of information `Search, Selection,

and Synthesis'. The teacher creates a problem setting in which some of the information needed to solve the problem is unavailable. The student must search for this information, select the appropriate information for each stage of problem solving, and synthesize the information into a coherent response to the problem.

Finally, Jones (1982) represents a general guide to the use of simulations in language teaching. Jones provides generally good suggestions on selecting, adapting, and executing simulations in language teaching. However, he concentrates on simulations specifically designed for educational purposes (though not necessarily language teaching purposes). Crookall (1984) also provides a practical rationale for the use of non-ELT simulations in language teaching.

THE PILOT PROJECT

The simulation game: BUSINESS STRATEGY

The simulation used in the pilot project was Business Strategy (Avalon Hill: 1973). Business Strategy simulates competition among a group of manufacturing companies. Companies compete to acquire raw materials, manufacture finished goods, and sell these manufactured goods on the open market. Companies seek to maximize their worth and to avoid bankruptcy. In order to accomplish this, each company's executives must "analyze market conditions, take shrewd advantage of competitors' circumstances, and operate factories and warehouses at peak

efficiency". In terms of communication activities, simulation participants must interact with fellow company executives, executives of competing companies, and with the game controller and banker.

The game is played as a series of twelve turns, each representing one month. Within each turn, players face decisions in each of six phases: (1) paying fixed expenses, (2) acquiring raw materials, (3) manufacturing finished inventory, (4) selling finished inventory, (5) making and paying loans, and (6) investing in capital improvements. Decisions made in these phases depend on market conditions provided through 'business climate cards'.

The game is complex enough that it remains a challenge to participants, but is simple enough that it can be learned in only a few hours. The game also has the advantage of having been designed by gaming experts in consultation with business and educational professionals so that its pace is rapid and its representation of genuine business management situations convincing.

The simulation setting

Students of high intermediate and advanced oral proficiency were invited to participate in the simulation. Twenty-two students signed up for the event, and twenty completed it. For the purposes of this study, participants were compensated for their involvement in order to guarantee that a sufficient number would complete the simulation.

Eight Institute staff members coordinated the event, serving as game controllers and facilitators and providing instruction and support to the six competing teams.

The simulation was conducted within the physical facilities of the Institute. Each team was assigned an Institute office which was equipped with a telephone and tape recorder. The game controller and banker were located in an additional office. Two classrooms were also utilized for informal communication and for the debriefing session.

The simulation was conducted over two days for a total of twelve hours. On the first day, students met for about three hours for the initial briefing session which included a general introduction and instruction in game rules and procedures. On the second day, students met for nine hours which included the simulation itself and a final debriefing.

Pre-simulation preparation

Trial runs

Institute staff participated in three trial runs. These trials served several purposes. First, they allowed staff to assess the language level, in terms of vocabulary and student interaction, best suited for the simulation. In our simulation, students from high-intermediate to advanced oral skills levels were invited to participate, an assessment of desired language ability which proved to be accurate.

Second, the trial runs allowed staff to become acquainted with the game. Staff discovered which phases and aspects of the game invited more or less discourse interaction among the participants. They determined where during the course of the simulation additional language activities could best be inserted. In addition, they determined how long each phase of each game turn would ordinarily take. And, they identified specific areas in game play that were likely to cause confusion among the participants.

Adaptation

After careful consideration, three adaptations to the simulation were made. First, as this simulation was designed for native speakers, it was necessary to simplify the language of the rules.

Second, it was necessary to alter one rule regarding emergency loans. According to game rules, emergency loans could be taken out at any time during the game except during Phase 5, when normal loans could be requested. Not wanting participants to go bankrupt and drop out of the simulation, the rule was changed to allow the banker to extend an emergency loan without requiring a factory or other assets as collateral.

Third, it was important to control carefully the choice of business climate cards, which establish the critical market conditions for each month. In the first hours of the simulation, cards were selected reflecting average market

conditions in order not to lose students right away due to inexperienced judgment. As the day progressed and student skill level increased, the market was made more competitive.

Language activities

The language activities which occurred during the course of the simulation fell into three categories: the natural oral discourse stimulated by the event itself; language testing conducted in order to gather some preliminary data to substantiate the benefits of the simulation; and additional exercises in written discourse.

One of the major reasons for deciding to use simulations in English language teaching is the amount of enthusiastic oral communication that occurs spontaneously among simulation participants. The discourse created by participants in Business Strategy is extremely rich. Participant language use includes a wide range of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and general linguistic functions. Lexical items include business terminology related to the buying and selling of finished goods and raw materials and their production and storage, as well as banking terms regarding capital assets, loans, and interest. Grammatical structures include virtually all sentence and clause level structures. Briefly, the linguistic functions in the simulation include requesting and giving information and explanations, agreeing/disagreeing, persuading, and interrupting.

In our business simulation, students were pretested and post-tested for their knowledge of business vocabulary and principles basic to the simulation and their ability to organize and write memoranda and business letters in proper format. The decision to pre- and post-test was based on the desire to evaluate the amount and type of language acquired through the activity. As Crookall (1984) points out, there is a need for research to substantiate the claims regarding the benefits of simulations for language acquisition.

The vocabulary test was constructed as follows. During the trial runs, key words and potentially new or difficult expressions were noted. A short reading passage was then constructed which incorporated this vocabulary. The vocabulary items were subsequently deleted, leaving blanks for the students to fill in with the help of a word list. This vocabulary exercise was given to students as a pretest during the briefing and as a post-test after the simulation.

Students were also pretested during the briefing for their knowlege of basic business principles crucial to the successful completion of the simulation game. The same test was given as a post-test following the simulation.

During the simulation event, students were tested on their ability to prepare business memoranda and letters on topics related to the simulation. In both cases simple writing samples were collected.

Two supplementary language activities were inserted into the simulation event. It was decided that no more than two supplementary activities should be inserted to avoid interrupting the natural pace of the simulation. The memorandum

exercise was given during the morning after several rounds of play when it seemed that everything was progressing smoothly. The business letter activity was reserved for the afternoon.

In the memorandum exercise, students were asked initially to write a memorandum within five minutes on a given topic without having had any previous instruction on memorandum writing. Shortly thereafter, Institute staff provided each team five minutes of immediate instruction on proper memo organization and format and then gave them another memorandum exercise as a post-test. The same procedure was followed for administering the business letter exercise, except that ten minutes were devoted to the writing and instruction tasks.

Student briefing session

A three-hour briefing was held for all participants the day before the simulation. Time was first allotted for the vocabulary and business principles pretests, which could be omitted for future events. Following the pretests, 22 students were divided randomly into six teams or "companies" of three or four people.

Next, a brief general overview of the game was provided by a staff member. Students were then instructed in the game rules and procedures through lecture, discussion, and practice trials for each successive phase of the business game. This was done not only to acquaint students with game procédure but also to observe student interaction to help determine the best possible groupings for the actual simulation.

After the briefing, student groups were altered according to staff observations of group dynamics in order to achieve optimal participant interaction. Primary considerations in grouping included native language and personality. In particular, the more extroverted students were placed together so that quieter students would not be overshadowed but rather encouraged to collaborate and become more vocal. Attempts were made to separate close friendships, so participants could meet new people and establish new relationships. As all students were from high-intermediate to advanced oral skill levels, oral language proficiency was not a consideration in grouping.

Students were provided with a list of key vocabulary and definitions and with a set of game rules at the end of the briefing to take home and study as preparation for the simulation the next day.

Simulation execution

The simulation began at 9:00 on a Saturday morning with all participants meeting in one large room for a brief review of game procedure. As had been expected, there was some attrition and two students did not show up, leaving us with a total of 20 participants. Each was given a folder with copies of game sheets, a list of company offices and telephone numbers, a pad of legal paper, sharpened pencils, and a name tag. At this time, students were informed of their company groups and then allowed to adjourn to their offices.

The more authentic the space allocated to students is, the more realistic the simulation will be. In this case, each "company" was given its own office to help create a more authentic environment. The offices permitted business interactions to be conducted privately, yet because the offices were adjacent, student interaction was encouraged. Each office was equipped with a telephone, so students were able to call each other to check on bids, sell factories, form cartels, etc. Tape recorders were also placed unobtrusively in each office to record student oral interaction for later analysis. Participant anxiety about taperecording was removed during the briefing sessions by reassurances that the recordings were for research purposes only and not for assessment.

Game board sheets listing each company's assets were posted on a centrally located bulletin board to enable students to follow their competitors' business standings. The board quickly became a gathering place where students engaged in animated conversation regarding the market, bidding, and each company's financial state, while eagerly awaiting the posting of new information.

Bookkeeping was done by the "Bank", run by two members of the staff; however, in the future that arduous, but highly important, role will be assumed by an IBM computer using staff-produced software. This will facilitate business transactions while reducing the possibility of human error.

A support staff of seven instructors acted as runners between the bank and each company, requesting bids and providing information on procedure and company options. These roles could be assumed in subsequent simulations by students familiar with the simulation.

The simulation moved at a quick pace, which increased as the day progressed. Each six-phase game turn averaged 25 minutes; each phase then moved quite rapidly, averaging from three to five minutes. The pace of the simulation was set by the game controller who demanded timely responses from each company. Control of the pace of this simulation was crucial to its success.

The simulation continued until 5:00 with an hour break for a "business lunch" provided by the Institute, as well as brief pauses mid-morning and afternoon with refreshments. Since the action was both intense and fast, the breaks in activity and refreshments were instrumental in maintaining student energy and motivation.

The simulation ended by mutual consent of the competing companies after 10 simulated months, or turns. At this time, the Bank calculated the net worth of each company to determine its final competitive standing.

Debriefing

Immediately following the simulation event, a debriefing session was held for all participants. Post-tests were administered first. Then the final competitive standings were announced, which resulted in a great deal of mutual and spirited congratulating and commiserating. No bad feelings resulting from a company's final standing were in evidence.

Finally, staff and participants engaged in a review of the simulation. Suggestions from both students and staff were elicited and will be taken into consideration in the future development of this simulation and others undertaken at the Institute.

Results

Quantitative measures

Seeking to provide some empirical support for our belief that the use of business simulations in language training is beneficial to students, we constructed four tests which were administered to the group both as pretests and as post-tests. One test was a cloze test for vocabulary; the second and third required writing samples of business memoranda and letters, and the fourth was a multiple choice test on fundamental business principles.

For all four tests two statistical comparisons were made. First, the student *t*-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference overall on a given test between the performance of the students before and after the simulation. Second, the scores were placed into two groups based on how each team finished (HIGH=1st, 2nd and 3rd place teams; LOW=4th, 5th, and 6th place teams). These scores were used in analyses of variance to examine whether game performance might in some way be associated with test performance.

On the vocabulary test, comparison of pre- and post-test scores reveals a highly significant difference ($p<.001$ on *t*-test using percentage correct as data) overall. Student knowledge of pertinent general business vocabulary clearly increased over the course of the simulation. Comparison of the high and low team scores (ANOVA) reveals no interaction between vocabulary test results and the performance of a particular team. What this means is that both groups show the same trend of improvement on the vocabulary test from pre- to post-test.

On the writing samples, comparison of pre- and post-test scores reveals again a highly significant improvement ($p<.001$). Students clearly improved, here with limited direct instruction, their ability to organize simple business memos and letters. Comparison of the high and low team scores again reveals no interaction between the writing tests and the performance of a particular team. Here, too, the students show overall a great deal of improvement over the course of the simulation.

On the business principles test, comparison of scores for all subjects reveals no significant change from pre- to post-test ($p>.25$). Taken as a whole, students did not show much improvement in their understanding of general business principles over the course of the simulation. However, comparison of the high and low team scores does reveal one interesting difference. Members of HIGH teams do show significant improvement over the course of the simulation ($p<.04$); it is only members of LOW teams who do not.

It should be made explicit that the pretest/post-test format does not provide genuine experimental evidence on the benefits of simulations for two reasons. First, we did not have a suitable control group. Comparison with Institute

students who did not participate in the game would not be appropriate for (1) they are less interested in business in general, and (2) they and the experimental group would not have been randomly assigned to their respective conditions. Second, in the pretest/post-test format, observed improvements in test scores may be due to factors other than the simulation. In our case, the good results we see could be due, for instance, to the students' time commitment (12 hours) and not to the simulation itself.

Despite these limitations, the results we see are encouraging. It is clear that the students who participated in the simulation did show a significant change in their linguistic abilities after they completed the event. And it is especially heartening to see such change after such a short time. It is also extremely interesting to see that the students who performed best in the simulation competition turned out to be the students who showed the greatest improvement on the final business test. While this observation may turn out to be merely a chance happening, it still remains a very interesting hypothesis to explore.

Overall, we are pleased with the outcome of our simple testing. Given the duration of the event (12 hours) and the minimal amount of instruction provided, we did not expect to see significant changes at all. So, while we must conservatively point out that we cannot conclude that the improvement in test scores was due directly to participation in the simulation, we do believe that such an inference is reasonable and represents a worthwhile hypothesis to consider further.

Discourse performance

During the course of the simulation, each team was audio-recorded for a total of six hours. These recordings represent a valuable source of data on student volubility and fluency in oral production and on the social organization of their discourse interactions. Preliminary review of the audiotapes reveals the following:

(1) Students were highly engaged in oral production throughout the simulation.

(2) Students show a higher density of individually motivated response during the simulation than during even very good oral skills classes at the Institute.

(3) Students became more adept and comfortable in using the telephone.

(4) Reticent students were considerably more vocal than usual.

Overall, it is very clear from a review of the audiotapes that students were highly involved and active during the simulation event. If one of the goals of oral production activities is to stimulate students to attempt to communicate, to use their developing language abilities, then it is obvious that simulations can help achieve this. Our observations regarding discourse performance at this point are not conclusive for we report here only our subjective analysis of the taped data. When the transcription and analysis of the audiotapes has been completed, we expect to show empirically the differences we describe above between the simulation event and ordinary oral skills classes.

The affective domain

Even though we have no concrete, objective measurements to report, we do have two observations to make concerning the affective environment of the simulation experience and its aftereffects.

First, it is perfectly clear, even from the most informal observations, that the simulation day generated a genuinely animated and completely positive affective environment. Students quickly became caught up in the competitive spirit and the excitement of buying and selling. They saw the simulation as an excellent opportunity to improve their knowledge of basic business vocabulary and principles as well as their oral/aural skills in general. During the simulation, students commented regularly to teachers how much they enjoyed and valued the special event, and they also requested that the simulation be repeated.

Second, we are presently offering this simulation as the heart of an experimental elective course in business communication. Ordinarily, elective courses in the Institute setting attract from ten to twelve students. Initial response to the announcement of the new simulation-based business communication elective brought 24 students to the first meeting, a clear reflection of the enthusiasm generated by the original simulation.

All in all, in the absence of careful, systematic observation, one must be cautious about making strong claims about the affective setting of language learning. Yet, it is apparent to those of us who participated in the simulation that participants reacted to the event enthusiatically and that this feeling continues beyond the event itself.

IMPLEMENTING A SIMULATION: METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

Choosing a suitable simulation

There are at least five points to consider in selecting a suitable simulation for language training: purpose, content, simulation design, student abilities, and logistics.

First, the purpose of the highly interactive, dynamic simulation we conducted was to provide students with an opportunity to exercise oral language skills they had been developing throughout the quarter and to provide an interesting, exciting change of pace later in the academic term, though such a simulation could also serve to facilitate student interaction at the beginning of a term. Care should be taken in reviewing simulations for these purposes to ensure that they invite significant levels of oral interaction. The only way one can be truly certain of this, of course, is to try out the simulation oneself.

Simulations can also be used for other purposes, such as language skills assessment or developing cross-cultural awareness. See Jones (1982) for discussion of how such simulations differ from the one we conducted.

Second, it is obvious that the specific content area of the simulation ideally should meet the interests of the students. Student interests should be determined through an appropriate, if brief, needs analysis, involving the students directly and their academic advisers if appropriate. Further, one

should not assume that students will be interested only in simulations in their own disciplines. Our simulation did draw a number of students from areas other than business due, in part, to effective priming of interest by staff members.

In selecting a simulation, one should bear in mind that the purpose of a content area simulation is not to teach the subject matter per se, but to allow students the opportunity to communicate within the framework of the subject matter.

Third, Jones (1982) describes the three essential elements of a well-designed simulation: reality of function, a simulated environment, and structure. A simulation demonstrates reality of function if the participants are involved in solving problems representative of the 'real world' with methods that would be ordinarily used in that situation. A simulation has a simulated environment when participants are sheltered from any adverse consequences resulting from their decisions. A simulation has structure if the necessary information and organization of simulation tasks are provided by the simulation designer.

Business Strategy, as one example, satisfies all three of these criteria. It demonstrates reality of function by requiring participants to make business decisions taking into account factors real executives consider. It has a simulated environment because no one loses any real money as a result of poor decision making. And it clearly has structure, for the game designer provides virutally all the information and organization needed to carry out the simulation tasks.

If these three design elements are present, appropriate functional discourse will follow. We recommend considering simulations designed by experts in subject matter disciplines. Simulations designed specifically for ESL students are often stilted and contrived, being simply elaborate role plays in which students are asked to assume roles which may seem too artificial.

Fourth, in selecting a simulation, the oral skill level of participants must be taken into account. Of importance is not so much whether students can produce target language norms in grammar and lexicon as whether they can communicate reasonably effectively in terms of specific linguistic functions and simulation duties. While it is true that students taking part in a simulation will help each other to understand aspects of language or the simulation itself, a simulation which is too far beyond the range of a student's language abilities will be a frustrating experience at best.

Finally, the logistics of the simulation -- time, numbers, space, staff, and cost -- must be considered. The amount of time available for conducting the simulation should correspond with the time needed to complete the simulation activities. (Simulations vary in length from a few hours to several days).

The number of participants required to take part in the simulation should be determined. It is better to have too many participants than too few, for one is bound to have a certain amount of attrition. And, in adapting simulations, it is usually easier to expand them for a larger group successfully than to reduce them for a smaller number.

The space for the simulation should be adequate and realistic. Simulations which call for an exchange of private information may require separate rooms. Cooperative problem solving could take place in a single large room. In both cases, rooms should be of adequate size so that participants can comfortably interact.

The costs of acquiring a simulation and of providing staff support for it should be taken into account. In examining staff costs, one must consider development time for the simulation as well as the actual time devoted to the simulation event.

Preparing for the simulation

Pre-simulation preparation includes the following: trial runs, adaptation, and selection of language activities.

It is essential that the simulation organizers conduct several trial runs of the simulation themselves before trying to implement it for students. This process permits organizers to determine linguistic needs and to understand timing and simulation procedures.

First, in regard to linguistic considerations, organizers should assess the language skills used and the minimum second language proficiency required for a lively and effective simulation. In addition, organizers should determine where to insert additional language activities that may be desired.

Second, organizers should should review how time was utilized during the trial runs in order to identify the time needed to complete simulation tasks and to get a sense of pacing. One should record specifically the time it takes for initial training in simulation procedures, the total amount of time required to complete the simulation, and the timing of specific sub-phases or procedures in the simulation. Our experience reveals that high-intermediate and advanced level students do not need significantly more time than the organizers. However, as the size of the participant group increases, one should expect that additional time will be needed.

Third, organizers should identify possible areas of student difficulty for subsequent clarification or adaptation. During the trial runs, organizers may become aware of ambiguous or unclear aspects of simulation rules or procedures, areas of particular complexity for participants (including lexical items), and specific strategies that lead either to success or failure for participants. These matters should be explicitly identified in order to permit adaptation or to anticipate areas where additional participant support would be advantageous.

We suggest that trial runs be conducted very carefully, with organizers taking extensive and explicit notes on time flow, difficulties in understanding procedure and strategy, and linguistic interaction.

Adaptations to a simulation should be made only after careful consideration. In all cases, adaptation should be minimal, for if extensive adaptation seems necessary, the simulation chosen may not be suitable. Too hasty modifications or deletions may detract from the smooth operation of the simulation or alter the reality of the simulation itself.

The purpose in adaptation is to ensure that a simulation can proceed smoothly and with an appropriate level of challenge to the participants. With this in mind, minor adaptations can help to simplify the simulation for participants new to the experience or the subject matter, or they can help to increase the challenge to more experienced or knowledgable participants.

Well-designed simulations will invite participants to engage in extensive and enthusiastic oral interaction. In general, additional linguistic activities are not necessary. Still, other language activities may be added to supplement this rich, natural oral communication if desired. Care must be taken, however, in choosing the types of activities and the best times to insert them as unobtrusively as possible into the simulation. It is important to remember that any activity, whether oral or written, must fit into the reality of the simulation. Activities which are inappropriate for the particular situation, should be reserved for the classroom and not forced upon the simulation participants, as they only interrupt the natural acquisition process and put a damper on student enthusiasm and motivation.

Conducting a simulation

The simulation must begin with a briefing session for all participants. One purpose of the briefing is to help participants understand something of the general purpose and intended benefits of the simulation in their language training. A second purpose is to provide both a general overview of the simulation and specific training in simulation rules and procedures. If the

simulation utilizes teams or small groups, a third purpose of the briefing is to establish trial groups whose composition may be changed after preliminary interactions are observed. Finally, the briefing should be used to prime student enthusiasm for the simulation itself.

In conducting the simulation there are a number of essential guidelines to follow. One, all logistical arrangements (rooms, staff, refreshments, materials, and so on) must be completed before the starting time. Two, several rest periods should be planned and inserted at breaks in simulation activity or when participant energy level begins to fade.

Three, the simulation controller must ensure that pacing is maintained throughout the activity. It is essential that the controller not permit the simulation to drag due to a few slow participants. Four, if the simulation requires recordkeeping, the controller must maintain accurate records and the authority to resolve all disputes. Five, confusions, disputes, and ambiguities must be resolved immediately upon discovery and not permitted to persist.

Six, staff should be fully aware of simulation rules and procedures (and possibly strategy) in order to provide immediate support to participants needing assistance. Seven, staff must maintain a level of energy and enthusiasm equal to or greater than that of the participants. Eight, student energy and interest should be continuously monitored. The simulation should be ended before participants tire of it, even if this means ending it prematurely.

Finally, be prepared in spirit for the unexpected and prepared to act for the benefit of the participants and the simulation as a whole. Some errors, possibly major ones, are likely, and the controller should be ready to resolve them as equitably and as smoothly as possible.

It is good policy to include a debriefing session for all participants after the simulation to review what took place and make recommendations for future simulations. Such a session also provides a forum to discuss and resolve any hard feelings which might have arisen among competing teams. One must be careful, however, that the debriefing does not become a negative experience, allowing the simulation to end on a sour note. Students should be asked to point out aspects of the activity that they liked as well as those aspects they might like changed.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this paper we have tried to achieve two goals. First, we have described in detail the rationale, organization, and execution of a business management simulation in language training for ESL learners at the University of Oregon. Our results reveal that simulation participants showed some measurable change in their linguisitic abilities. In addition, the simulation obviously elicited a great deal of enthusiasm, motivation, and interest among the participants. We see either of these results as sufficient to consider simulations worthwhile.

Second, we have tried to provide some general methodological suggestions for those contemplating similar simulations for language training purposes. While it is not possible to provide great detail in these recommendations (for specifics depend on the particular simulation chosen), we hope nevertheless that these suggestions may prove helpful in organizing and conducting a successful simulation event.

The use of published educational or professional simulations represents a relatively untapped area for communicative language teaching. Well-designed simulations provide a wide range of realistic problems embedded in a specific and rich context which second language learners find challenging and stimulating. In the course of solving those problems, students quite naturally find themselves communicating in the target language, which, in the end, is exactly what we want them to do.

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